

# Ogun Conference

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Ogun Conference of Seventh-day Adventists was organized in 2013 and is part of Western Nigeria Union Conference in the West-Central Africa Division. It was formerly part of the South West Nigeria Conference. Ogun Conference covers the territory of Ogun state, one of the 36 states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The state is comprised of 20 local government areas which include Imeko, Yewa North, Yewa South, Ipokia, Ado-odo, Ifo, Ewekoro, Abeokuta North, Abeokuta South, Odeda, Obafemi-Owode, Remo North, Ikenne, Sagamu, Odogbolu, Ijebu-ode, Ijebu North, Ijebu North-East, and Ogun Waterside area. It is situated in the Southwestern part of the country.<sup>1</sup>

As of June 30, 2018, Ogun Conference had 24 churches, membership of 8,733, and general population of 5,138,600. Ogun Conference headquarters are in Abeokuta, Ogun state, Nigeria.<sup>2</sup> The Adventist to general population ratio is about 1:572. The following are the workforce of the conference: 15 Ministerial Credential, four Ministerial License, four Missionary Credential, one Missionary License, five Bible Workers, five District Evangelists, 16 Primary School Workers, and 245 Elders. There are also 86 congregations, comprising 25 churches and 61 companies. These are being managed under the administration of eight districts, namely: Abeokuta, Babcock, Ijebu-ode, Ilaro, Ilisan North, Ilisan West, Sagamu, and Sango-ota.<sup>3</sup>

## Background

The major language spoken in the state is Yoruba, though diverse dialectical groups include: *Awori*, *Egba*, *Egbado*, *Egun*, *Ijebu*, and *Remo*. The state capital is its largest city, Abeokuta. Ogun state's neighbors are the country of Benin on the west, Ondo state on the east, Osun and Oyo states on the north, and Lagos state on the south. Islam is the predominant religion in Ogun state, followed by traditional religions, while Christianity is last. The Ogun state people are best known as good businessmen and women who first had encounters with White men or Europeans. One of the best-known products in Ogun state is the local production of batik, a locally made cloth, known as *adire*.<sup>4</sup>

## History of Church Establishment in Ogun Territory

The Seventh-day Adventist message was first preached in Abeokuta by Elder S. O. Oyelese in 1926, and this was also the first time it was preached in Ogun state, Nigeria. Elder S. O. Oyelese was a literature evangelist at that

time. Chief Fasaanu worked for God in the area between 1928 and 1929, and he later took the Adventist message to Kuta where the S.D.A. Primary School was later established in 1955<sup>5</sup> and still stands today, being controlled by the Ogun state government.<sup>6</sup>

The Seventh-day Adventist Church was first established in Ogun territory in Abeokuta in 1926 through the efforts of people such as Elder S. O. Oyelese, Chief Fasanu, and Pastor I. A. Balogun (the first ordained SDA minister in Nigeria). The ministries of indigenous pastors such as Pastors J. M. A. Adeoye and I. O. Adewusi helped spread the work within the Abeokuta metropolis.<sup>7</sup>

Ijebu-ode became the second place the Seventh-day Adventists entered in Ogun state through the effort of Pastor J. M. A. Adeoye in 1933. His first convert was Johnson Adekoya Efuntade, a former Christian in U. M. A. Church from nearby Omu-Ijebu.<sup>8</sup>

Ilisan-Remo became the third point in Ogun state where the Adventist Church was established in 1959 with the inauguration of the Adventist College of West Africa. Thereafter the college conducted several outreach efforts and revivals. This influenced and impacted Egbejimi Johnson Awosanya and his wife who joined the church with Moses Awotedu and were baptized as the first set of indigenes in 1965. Pastor and Mrs. J. D. Awoniyis' pioneered the work in this community, and Pastor Samuel Adebawo is an indigenous minister from this town.<sup>9</sup>

The church in Sagamu came into existence as the fourth point of contact in Ogun state as a result of the effort of Dr. Stuart Berkley, college principal (ACWA) in the late 1960s. He sent students to Sagamu for evangelism and later appointed Pastor Samuel Olatunji Adebawo to be the minister of the new branch Sabbath School in 1967. He worked briefly before Pa P. O. Ogunsanya, the longest serving secretary of ACWA, took over the church and worked to sustain its growth. Among the early converts were, Pa David Jekami, Pa Okeowo, Pa Agara, Pa Julius Anjola, Pa Ejaomi, and few others.<sup>10</sup>

The fifth point of call for the Adventist Church was in Ilaro, which started in 1982 after an outreach program led by Pastor I. Olu Adewusi in Ilaro Town. The pioneering pastors were Pastor J. A. Popoola and later Pastor Taiwo Isola. The first members were Pa Sunday Ogundimu, brothers Olowofela and Efuntade (the sons of the first convert in Ijebu Ode) and the *Oba's* (king) children.<sup>11</sup>

## How Ogun Became an Administrative Unit

At the constituency session of the South West Nigeria Conference (SWNC) on February 3, 2011, at Akure, Ondo state, it was voted, "To restructure or reorganize South West Nigeria Conference into two or more conferences and empower the incoming administration to implement it in liaising with Union leadership."<sup>12</sup>

The incoming conference executive committee took an action (EXCO 2011:058) in line with the five-point agenda of the North-Western Nigeria Union to restructure the SWNC into three conferences which were Lagos, Ogun, and Ekiti/Ondo. Based on the recommendation made by the SWNC executive committee to reorganize the

conference into three fields, which has been voted by the union executive committee at the 2011 midyear meeting, a special constituency meeting was called on July 17, 2011, for final ratification. At this meeting the motion to reorganize the existing structure into three conferences was made by Pastor E. A. Adeleye (the president of SWNC) and seconded by S. O. Aremu.

A special inaugural service for the Ogun Conference Administrative Unit was held on December 3, 2011, at Nigeria Union of Teacher (NUT) Secretariat, Abeokuta, Ogun state. Three leaders were appointed for the running of the administrative unit: Pastor Sunday O. Ogunsanya (president), Pastor Rufus O. Atoki (executive secretary), and Elder Hezekiah O. Onatunde (treasurer). The administrative unit began with 20 staff members, which included three administrators, four office workers, and 13 field pastors.<sup>13</sup> At the inception of the Ogun Administrative Unit in January 2012, there were 5,410 baptized members in seven district churches (Abeokuta, Babcock, Ijebu-ode, Ilisan North, Ilisan West, Sango, and Sagamu) and 48 local congregations.<sup>14</sup>

## How Ogun Became a Conference

After 12 months of meeting the requirements for organization as a conference as the result of increase in membership and infrastructure, including financial stability, the Ogun Conference of Seventh-day Adventists was inaugurated. The inaugural constituency session, which was combined with the Annual Ogun Family Camp Meeting, was held at Babcock University between December 19 and 22, 2012. On December 22, 2012, the dedicatory service of the administration was conducted.

The following were the officers, directors, and members of the executive committee that were dedicated that day: Sunday O. Ogunsanya (president); Rufus O. Atoki (executive secretary); Hezekiah O. Onatunde (treasurer). The departmental directors were Monday E. Famuyiwa (Publishing and SOP); Samuel O. Adesina (Global Mission/Adventist Relations); Priscille A. Metonou (Adventist Women's Ministries); Sunday Owolabi (Stewardship); Adeyemi Ogunbadejo (Strategic Planning/Development); Iheanacho, I. N. (PARL and Legal Services); Abiodun O. Olaoye (Youth and Chaplaincy); Moses B. Olaifa (Ministerial and Family Life); O. S. Bewaji (Personal Ministry/Evangelism/Sabbath School); T. A. Adetayo (Education); O. Adesegun (Health/Temperance); Julius O. Amira (Adventist Men's Organization); Joshua Sulaiman (Communication); D. T. Ogunsanya (Shepherdess International); Akinpelu, O. A (Associate Communication Director); Adeoti, J. A. F (Associate Youth Director). Other members of the executive committee were J. A. K. Makinde, Abosede Soyoye, Adedayo Adebawo, and Ikechukwu Omarji.<sup>15</sup>

Pioneer conference ministers included: A. J. Owolabi, J. A. F. Adeoti, A. A. Olubayo, O. J. Afolayan, O. A. Akinpelu, M. E. Famuyiwa, S. O. Bewaji, J. O. Jegede, J. O. Obaleye, T. C. Okorie, M. B. Olaifa, J. A. Olawumi, N. O. Omoleye, S. O. Ogunsanya and R. O. Atoki. Pioneer office workers included S. E. Abolarin (office assistant), Mrs. F. O. Ajayi (administrative secretary), James Friday (driver), and Michael Awoniyi (accountant).<sup>16</sup>

## Impact of the Conference

Babcock University is in the territory of Ogun Conference. The conference has two high schools, and five primary schools. The fifth primary school, Babcock Nursery and Primary School, Abeokuta, was commissioned in September 2016. Through these educational institutions the church is making a positive impact on society, as many of the students in these schools are not Adventists.

## Current Leaders

The present administration of Ogun Conference (2017-present) includes Pastor Sunday O. Ogunsanya (president), Pastor Oluseun A. Akinpelu (executive secretary), and Elder Hezekiah O. Onatunde (Treasurer).<sup>17</sup>

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